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EAST TIMOR

Who is to Blame?

Statement Before the UN Special Committee on Decolonization - July 1994

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This report contains the text of an oral statement about human rights in East Timor delivered by Amnesty International before the United Nations (UN) Special Committee on Decolonization on 13 July 1994. It also provides detailed evidence of human rights violations committed in the past year, and examines continued restrictions on access to East Timor by international human rights organizations. The report concludes with a set of recommendations to the Indonesian Government and UN Member States.

The oral statement argues that, because of their silence and inaction in the past year, member states of the UN share responsibility with the Government of Indonesia for the continuing human rights problem in East Timor. The weakness of the international posture toward Indonesia was epitomized by the Consensus statement read by the Chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights in March of 1994. Despite the fact that the Indonesian Government had failed utterly to implement any of the concrete recommendations made in previous resolutions - in particular the Commission's 1993 resolution - the Consensus statement praised the government for unspecified "positive measures" it had taken toward the protection of human rights. The dangers inherent in such a weak statement have been grimly illustrated by evidence of continuing human rights violations in the past year. Far from encouraging the Indonesian authorities to improve their human rights practice - as some government claimed it would do - the Consensus statement appears only to have encouraged them to preserve the status quo.

In the year since Amnesty International last addressed the UN Special Committee on Decolonization, torture and ill-treatment have remained as the centre-piece of a strategy for silencing real and suspected political opponents of Indonesian rule in East Timor, and for extracting political intelligence through intimidation and coercion.

Extrajudicial executions have continued to be reported, while the fate of those killed or "disappeared" in the Santa Cruz massacre of November 1991, and in previous years, has yet to be clarified. Following a well-established pattern, hundreds of alleged political opponents have been arbitrarily detained within the past year, and at least 26 are currently serving terms of up to life imprisonment following unfair political trials.

Despite its stated commitment to the protection of human rights, the Indonesian Government has done little to investigate past violations, and has failed to take significant measures to prevent their future occurrence. Military authorities continue to dominate the government and to operate with considerable autonomy in East Timor, with scant regard to human rights concerns. With rare exceptions, the perpetrators of human rights crimes have not been brought to justice. Finally, notwithstanding repeated government claims of increased openness, access to the territory remains restricted and some international human rights organizations - including Amnesty International - continue to be denied access to the territory altogether.

KEYWORDS: TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT1 / EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION1 / IMPUNITY1 / DISAPPEARANCES1 / TRIALS / LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT / DEATH IN CUSTODY / INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION / DETENTION FOR RE-EDUCATION / ILL-HEALTH / SEXUAL HARASSMENT / PRISON CONDITIONS / CONFESSIONS / RESTRAINTS / PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE1 / STUDENTS / RELIGIOUS GROUPS - CATHOLIC / HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS / POLITICAL PRISONERS / CIVIL SERVANTS / POLICE AS VICTIMS / FOREIGN NATIONALS / WITNESSES / WOMEN / MILITARY1 / DEMONSTRATIONS1 / PRISONERS' TESTIMONIES1 / PRISONERS' LISTS / AI AND GOVERNMENTS / MSP / MEC / ICRC / UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS /

This report summarizes a 37-page document (10,334 words), *East Timor: Who is to Blame? Statement Before the UN Special Committee on Decolonization - July 1994* (AI Index: ASA 21/31/94), issued by Amnesty International on 13 July 1994. Anyone wanting further details or to take action on this issue should consult the full document

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